



Reddit, Inc.

548 Market Street #16093
San Francisco, CA 94104

The Honorable Senator Brian Schatz
722 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

August 16th, 2019

Dear Senator Schatz,

Thank you for your letter of July 15th regarding the 2020 Census. We agree wholeheartedly that an accurate Census is fundamental to our democracy. We further believe that the best defense against interference in the Census is a strong offense in building up a record of good information. To that end, I am pleased to share that we have already been in touch with the Census Bureau to cooperate on ways to elevate authoritative voices and ensure that accurate information about the Census is readily available on Reddit.

Nevertheless, we do recognize that bad actors exist, and for that reason we have policies, procedures, and structural elements in place to support the integrity of our site. Reddit is structured quite differently from other sites, and our users themselves are central to matters of community moderation. Unique features include a federalized community architecture, the empowerment of users as moderators, and an open, transparent product design. These structural differences are crucial to our security strategy, and despite our small employee base, have made Reddit demonstrably more resilient than other platforms when it comes to attempts at manipulation.

We also have a strong sitewide Content Policy¹ that lays out the rules by which all Reddit users must abide. With regard to issues of the Census and disinformation, it is salient to point out our policies against impersonation, as well as against the solicitation of personal or confidential information. We also have general prohibitions against misuse of the platform through coordinated inauthentic behavior. This would encompass schemes to use Reddit to interfere with the Census.

With regard to misinformation, our Quarantine² policy limits the reach of content that promotes hoaxes or other verifiably false content. The Quarantine function puts a warning on communities devoted to such content, cautioning the user and referring them to authoritative sources of information. It also removes the content from search and relevance recommendations, so as not to amplify it.

It is important to note, however, that given Reddit's federal community structure, the Content Policy is a baseline, not a ceiling. Each Reddit community is free to set its own, more specific rules above and beyond those we have established. We support them in this by providing community moderators with specialized tools to enforce their rules within their individual subreddits, including the ability to take

¹ Reddit Content Policy: <https://www.redditinc.com/policies/content-policy>

²Quarantined Subreddits:

<https://www.reddithelp.com/en/categories/rules-reporting/account-and-community-restrictions/quarantined-subreddits>



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down other users' posts, ban users, filter links, and block offensive language. As a result, more than 99% of content moderation actions on Reddit are undertaken by users themselves, rather than by company employees. This is documented in our most recent Transparency Report.³

Still, policies and site architecture can only go so far, and for these reasons we have also been investing heavily in the teams and tools that our company uses to proactively detect, investigate, and neutralize bad actors. We have been informing and conversing with our users about these efforts in a dedicated subreddit, <https://www.reddit.com/r/redditsecurity/>, which you can visit for more details.

Finally, we have been working to ensure that we have the appropriate contacts in place both with relevant peer companies and government agencies, including the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security. We look forward to continuing to develop these relationships not only in service of the Census, but also to assure the protection of other democratic processes and institutions.

Thank you once again for your outreach. Please note that should you be visiting San Francisco, you are always most welcome to visit our office.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jessica Ashooh", followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line.

Dr. Jessica P. Ashooh
Director of Policy
Reddit, Inc.

³ 2018 Transparency Report: <https://www.redditinc.com/policies/transparency-report-2018>